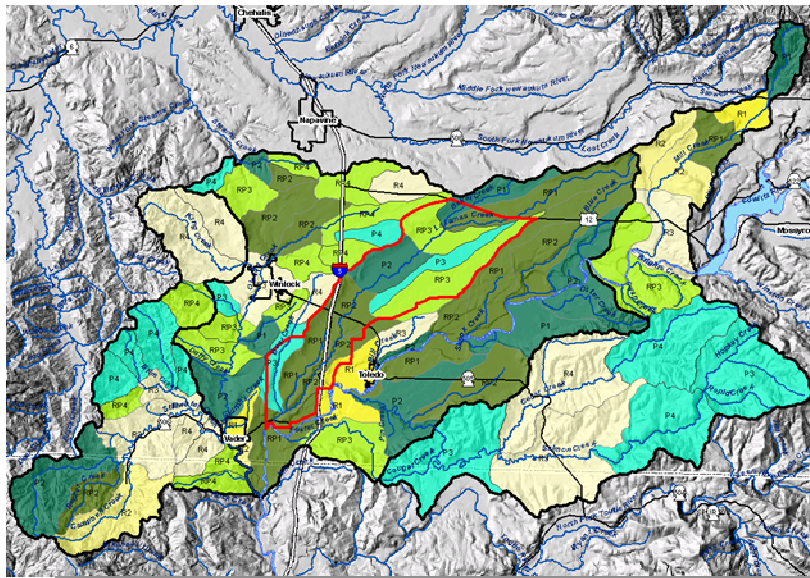


## Summary of Characterization Results for South Lewis County, May 2009

In spring 2008 the Washington State Legislature provided funding to Lewis County, the Department of Ecology, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife to assist in a watershed based subarea plan for the watersheds surrounding the towns of Toledo, Winlock, and Vader. The primary objectives of this watershed-based subarea plan are to:

1. provide better long-term protection of watershed processes and functions, including fish and wildlife habitat
2. identify the best areas for protection, restoration, and development
3. create an economic development strategy for the South County (Toledo, Winlock & Vader)



The watershed plan included the characterization of water flow processes and wildlife habitat (Local Habitat Assessment). The characterization was based on the importance of a watershed to water flow processes and the degree to which those processes have been altered. In the adjacent figure darker green areas have a higher priority for protection, lighter green less. Darker yellow areas have a high priority for restoration. Light colored areas may be more suitable for development. Overall, the Cowlitz River and adjoining terrace areas were identified as having a higher priority for protection and restoration.

### Local Habitat Assessment

Land across the watershed area was characterized in two ways. First, general habitat condition was assessed using information on species occurrence, known biodiversity priorities, the condition of cover vegetation, and the level of human development. Second, the size and type of existing habitat patches and their position on the landscape were related to the habitat needs of a representative set of focal species.

The second method pinpointed the part of the subarea that appears to be most capable of supporting a high diversity of wildlife. This zone, outlined in red in the figure above, encompasses the Lacamas Creek corridor and some adjoining lands, and is identified as a habitat focus area for the subarea plan. Future development that is compatible (i.e. lower intensity) with habitat needs in this focus area would help assure the persistence of south county wildlife species into the future.

**Protection:** Any activity that ensures that **the watershed process remains relatively unimpaired**. This can encompass traditional efforts of protecting land from human activities (e.g., open space, conservation easements), but it can also mean designing development in a way that allows the natural movement of water to continue with minimal impairment. For instance, an area important for recharge could be set aside from any development, or new development could be sited and designed to ensure recharge of the additional surface runoff generated by the development.

**Restoration:** Any activity that ensures that **the watershed process is re-established or rehabilitated**. This can involve restoring the natural condition of an important area but it can also include activities that restore the capacity of the important area to support the process. For instance, an area important for recharge that is covered with impervious surfaces could be modified to accommodate recharge or it could be restored to natural conditions.

